

Aides Say Robert Kennedy Told of C.I.A. Castro Plot

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 9 — Two former key aides to the late Robert F. Kennedy say that he told them in 1967 that agents of the Central Intelligence Agency had contracted with the Mafia in an aborted plot to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba before the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

Adam Walinsky and Peter B. Edelman, who were assistants to Mr. Kennedy when he was Attorney General and a Senator, said in interviews last week that Mr. Kennedy told them that he had played an active role in stopping the assassination attempt.

A high official of the C.I.A., informed of the Walinsky-Edelman account, said the agency would have "no comment."

Mr. Walinsky, now a lawyer in private practice in New York, said that Mr. Kennedy disclosed that he had received "assurances in writing" from the C.I.A. that the attempted assassination had been aborted. Those assurances came after Mr. Kennedy discussed the issue with high officials of the agency, Mr. Walinsky recalled the then-Senator saying.

"He told us that he had discovered that the C.I.A. had made a contract with the Mafia to hit Castro," Mr. Walinsky said.

The Walinsky-Edelman account was initially provided to The New York Times in separate off-the-record discussions in 1973 and restated Friday for direct attribution.

On March 3, 1967, Jack Anderson, the syndicated columnist, reported that the C.I.A. may have plotted Mr. Castro's assassination and depicted Mr. Kennedy as the official who "may have approved the operation." Mr. Anderson also cited what he termed persistent "rumors" to the effect that Mr. Castro may have become aware of the American plot and de-

cided to retaliate by having President Kennedy assassinated in 1963. Because of that possibility, the columnist suggested, Senator Kennedy may have been blaming himself for the death of his brother.

The column, published at a time of strained relations between Senator Kennedy and President Johnson, "outraged" the Senator, Mr. Walinsky recalled, and led to the discussion of the alleged C.I.A.-Mafia assassination attempt.

"I remember him saying, 'blame myself?' Mr. Edelman recalled. "I didn't start it [the Castro assassination attempt]; I stopped it."

Mr. Edelman, now a vice president for policy at the university of Massachusetts, further quoted Mr. Kennedy as saying, "I found out that some people were going to try an attempt on Castro's life and I turned it off."

Mr. Edelman said that Mr. Kennedy had "mentioned the Mafia." Mr. Edelman said that the inference he had then drawn from the conversation was that "someone associated with the C.I.A. had done this, but not necessarily that it had been officially anointed by the agency, whatever that means."

Clue Found in Las Vegas

Mr. Walinsky also recalled Mr. Kennedy as explaining in 1967 that he had learned of the alleged C.I.A.-Mafia link while working as an organized crime investigator for a Senate committee in the late fifties.

"He was out in Las Vegas," Mr. Walinsky recalled Mr. Kennedy as saying, "and a mobster told him, 'you can't touch me, I've got immunity,' he said 'who gave you immunity?' and the mobster said 'C.I.A.'"

"He went back and he checked and sure enough it was true," Mr. Walinsky said. "They had made a deal with this guy."

Mr. Walinsky said that Mr. Kennedy did not say in his conversation in 1967 who had informed him of the alleged C.I.A.-Mafia ties. He also said that Mr. Kennedy apparently learned more about that relationship while serving as President Kennedy's resident on a panel in 1961 that reviewed the C.I.A.'s planning and preparations for the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion.

Asked why Senator Kennedy did not try to make that said he could only speculate that he believed the Senator, who was assassinated while seeking the Democratic Presidential nomination, 1968, planned to take some corrective action toward C.I.A. if elected to the White House.

Briefing of Ford Reporters

A number of news organizations have reported that President Ford was briefed late last year on C.I.A.-connected assassinations or assassination attempts. The White House refused to comment.

Asked at a news conference last Thursday night what William E. Colby, director of Central Intelligence had to say about the allegations of assassination or assassination attempts on foreign leaders, Mr. Ford replied that he "not in a position to give a factual account."

Mafia leaders have been linked to American intelligence efforts since World War II, with Charles Luciano allegedly leading the planning for the Allied invasion of Sicily.

A number of Mafia leaders had extensive gambling syndicate holdings in Cuba leading to the late nineteen-thirties when Meyer Lansky opened his first casino in Havana. The Mafia also reportedly enjoyed a close relationship with Fulgencio Batista, the Cuban dictator whom Mr. Castro deposed.

After the Castro revolution in 1953, the gambling casinos and other activities were shut down by the Cuban Government and the Mafia allegedly worked closely with C.I.A. operatives in providing intelligence, planning and other help for the Bay of Pigs invasion, according to a number of Federal investigators.

In a book called "The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia," Alfred McCoy, then a Yale student, charged in 1972 that Corsican and American syndicate gangsters had become involved in the heroin trade from Laos, Burma and Thailand. He also wrote that such information was well known to many officials of the Central Intelligence Agency and that they had done nothing to stop such activities.

High officials of the intelligence agency, including Mr. Colby and Cord Meyer, now the station chief in London, denied the allegation at the time.

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P-Hersh Seymour
OEG 1 MAFIA
CASTRO, FIDEL

CIA 4.01 ASSASSINATIONS

WALINSKY, Adam

Kennedy, Robert F.

P-McCoy, ALFRED

CIA 1.01 Colby, William

CIA 1.03 Meyer, Cord

CIA 1.04 LANSDALE, EDWARD

CIA 4.01 DRUG TRAFFIC

GIANCANA, Sam

McQuire, Phyllis

CIA 3.01.7

(Orig under Hersh)

Mr. Smith, now a time magazine reporter who is highly respected for his reporting on organized crime, wrote that Mr. Giancana had become concerned because a prominent night club singer was becoming too attentive to Miss McGuire, and the C.I.A. apparently decided to help him confirm his suspicions.

An man describing himself as an "investigator" for a private detective agency in Florida was arrested by sheriff's police while prowling in Miss McGuire's hotel suite in Las Vegas. After persistent questioning, the detective agency told the police to get in touch with the C.I.A.

Explanation Lacking

The matter was apparently dropped without any formal charges being filed, but Mr. Smith wrote that neither the C.I.A. nor the detective agency ever offered the police an explanation of what the prowler had been doing in the hotel suite.

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